

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The project applicant, Umgcambo Trading (Pty) Ltd, proposes to clear ~122ha on Portion 525 of Farm Strathsomers Estate No. 42 (~154.285ha in extent and hereafter known as **Umgcambo**), in the Sundays River Valley Municipality (SRVM), for the establishment of ~116ha of citrus orchards and vegetables (butternut and pumpkin), as well as to install associated infrastructure. The proposed development also includes a new irrigation water storage dam (~4ha footprint), a logistical services area (~2ha footprint), as well as internal roads and internal irrigation pipes. Irrigation water for the development is proposed to be supplied from the Lower Sundays River Water Users Association (LSRWUA) canal system, via a pipeline (ø500mm diameter; ~1.5km length; ~0.75ha footprint) to be installed in an existing vehicle track along the fenceline, on an adjacent property, Portion 523 of Farm Strathsomers Estate No. 42, which is owned by the same landowner. The pipeline is required to be installed across and underneath the DR01976. Therefore, the total development footprint is proposed to measure ~122.75ha in extent and falls within the ~155ha area under assessment.

Access to Umgcambo is proposed off the gravel DR01976, via an existing access point and the nearest town to Umgcambo, Kirkwood, is located ~6.8km northwest of the site (see Locality Map in Chapter Two of the report). The nearest boundary of the Addo Elephant National Park (AENP) is located more than 10km north of Umgcambo and therefore, project activities proposed to take place on this property do not trigger listed activities which would require the assessment of impacts on the National Park. The installation of the irrigation water pipeline is proposed to take place on Portion 523, which is adjacent to Umgcambo. While Portion 523 is located within 10km of the AENP, the installation of the irrigation water pipeline does not trigger any listed activities, which would require the assessment of impacts on the National Park (i.e. activities in Listing Notice 3).

In terms of the NEMA EIA Regulations 2014 (as amended), published in GN R326, 327, 325 and 324, promulgated under Chapter Five of the National Environmental Management Act (Act 107 of 1998) (NEMAA), and published in Government Gazette 40772 on the 7 April 2017, the project requires full Scoping and Environmental Impact Assessment (Scoping and EIA), prior to the commencement of any activities on the site due to, amongst others, activities listed in GN R325, namely:

“15. The clearance of an area of 20 hectares or more of indigenous vegetation, excluding where such clearance of indigenous vegetation is required for -...”

At this stage of the assessment process a cautious approach has been adopted towards the identification of listed activities, and where there is uncertainty as to whether a listed activity applies to this project, it has been included. The following listed activities potentially require Environmental Authorisation:

- Listing Notice 1 (GN R327): 9. (i) and (ii); 13. and (ii); and 24. (ii) (c)
- Listing Notice 3 (GN R324): 2. a. ii. (dd); 4. a. i. (ee); and 10. a. i. (ee)

Chapter Four of this report provides details of the listed activities which require Environmental Authorisation. The project applicant has appointed Public Process Consultants as the independent Environmental Assessment Practitioner (EAP) to undertake the Scoping and EIA for the project. The competent authority who must consider and decide upon this application is the Provincial Department of Economic Development, Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEDEAT), Sarah Baartman Region.

It is anticipated that a portion of Umgcambo will not be deemed suitable for development, subject to the recommendations by the various specialists, as well as technical input (aquatic resources and associated buffers, areas required to meet biodiversity targets, soil suitability, slope etc). The preferred development footprint for the proposed project will be determined by the outcome of the assessment process.

In order to provide logistical support to the development it is proposed that a logistical services area of ~2ha be constructed to include offices (200m²) and a store (1000m²) for tractors, trailers, maintenance equipment, staff facilities (200m²), a manager's house (200m²), a fully enclosed

bunded, roofed facility of 100m² for temporary chemical storage of ~30m³, roof rainwater harvesting tanks (7 x 10 000L each), foul sewer conservancy tanks (store and offices – 7.5m³; manager's house – 13.2m³; and staff facilities – 56.25m³), stormwater detention facility (1 592m²/ 1 930m³), as well as a loading and collection zone (6 000m²) for the delivery and collection of product upgrading of an existing access point and a new access road around the facility. The additional services infrastructure required to support the logistical services area will be confirmed by a suitably qualified professional (Roads and Wet Services Report), as well as a Traffic Impact Assessment.

Additional power supply will be required in order to pump the irrigation water out of the proposed new dam on Umgcambo. Electricity is available up to the existing dam on the adjacent property. An extension to the existing electrical infrastructure (22kv) of ~1km in length from the existing infrastructure to the new dam on Umgcambo will be required. A new 22kv transformer (point of supply) will also be required to be installed. Written confirmation has been received from Eskom confirming the spare capacity of this line to provide the additional electricity required to service the proposed development.

The proposed agricultural development on Umgcambo can be divided into the following phases, which are outlined in more detail in the sections below:

- Preconstruction
- Construction
- Operational

Preconstruction Phase

The fruit proposed to be produced on site is predominantly for international markets, with some of the fruit to be processed (juiced) for local markets. In order to meet the requirements of export stock, seed (the foundation block seed) is required to be booked and purchased from a certified agency, the Citrus Foundation. This is booked ~2-years in advance in order to secure the seed, which includes a financial deposit.

The seed is provided to a certified nursery for a two year grow-out period, during which the seeds are germinated and the seedlings grown to sapling stage. Meticulous coordination is required between the Citrus Foundation for the purchase of the seed, the nursery for grow-out, and the citrus producer, in order to meet contractual obligations for harvesting and export of the crop. This is an on-going process, which is carefully timed and coordinated to allow the development of the site to take place seamlessly over the development timeframe proposed by Umgcambo.

Construction Phase

The project will entail the clearing of vegetation, levelling of the site, and the installation of the drip/micro irrigation system, as well as the establishment of the bulk irrigation infrastructure (i.e. pipeline and proposed dam), prior to the planting of the saplings. Once the site is prepared, citrus orchards will be established (refer to the operational phase of the development). It is anticipated that vegetation clearing, landscaping, site preparation and planting will be done both by hand and with the aid of suitable earth moving equipment (excavators, bulldozers, TLBs). No workers' accommodation will be provided on site during the construction phase.

Site preparation will entail the following activities on site:

- Clearing of indigenous vegetation;
- Landscaping and levelling the site for citrus orchards, as well as to provide runoff control and stormwater management;
- Establishment of internal unpaved service roads;
- Pipeline connection to the existing outlet associated with the dam on Portion 523 and installation of the ø500mm irrigation pipe to Umgcambo;
- Construction of the new irrigation dam (~80 000m³) on Umgcambo;
- Installation of internal water reticulation and irrigation infrastructure;
- Construction of the logistical services area, including the store and chemical store, as well as upgrading of an existing access point and construction of a new access road;

- Construction of the manager's house, staff facilities and office;
- Construction of associated domestic water and effluent management systems
- Planting of orchards and vegetables, as well as windbreaks (if necessary).

Site preparation needs to be completed to coincide with the planting of the trees, which occurs annually between September and March.

Operational Phase

Once the site is suitably prepared, the area will be utilised for the establishment of citrus orchards for predominantly international markets, with some fruit being sent for processing (juicing) for local markets. It is also the intention of the project applicant to plant vegetables for the local market (butternut and pumpkin) in between the orchards until the trees reach production stage.

Equipment required for the new operations will be stored in the proposed new storage sheds and workshop areas on Umgcambo. The following operational phase activities are associated with the project:

- Orchard establishment and planting of vegetables between trees until the trees reach production stage.
- Utilisation of the new logistical services area and associated staff facilities, as well office and manager's house;
- Water for the development will be supplied from the LSRWUA canals which will be reticulated from the proposed new balancing dam; and
- It is anticipated that a number of additional seasonal (96) and permanent (11) employment opportunities will be created by the project.

For more detail regarding the project description see Chapter Two of the Report.

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The vegetation on the properties surrounding Umgcambo to the north, west and east appears to be largely near-natural, although some modification (cut lines and vehicle tracks) is evident. In addition, these properties show various levels of degradation, presumably associated with domestic livestock grazing and game grazing. Portion 523, owned by the same landowner, is directly adjacent to the north eastern boundary of Umgcambo, and is currently engaged in commercial agricultural activities including citrus orchards, and vegetable production. Portion 523, upon which the irrigation pipe is proposed to be installed, is bound on its western, northern and eastern boundaries by cultivation. The "Sundays River Valley" area is located ~2.1km north of Umgcambo and is predominantly under intensive cultivation.

The site visit and preliminary input from the vegetation specialist confirmed that the vegetation on Umgcambo is Sundays Spekboom Thicket.

The condition of the vegetation is considered highly degraded in some areas, specifically towards the southern boundary of the farm, and is likely due to past wildlife and domestic livestock grazing and browsing. This is evidenced by several grassy areas dominated by *Cynodon dactylon* (Bermuda Grass), patches of *Pentzia incana* (Karoobossie) and *Mesembryanthemum aitonis* (Brakslaai). Additionally, some trees, such as *Pappea capensis* (Pruimbessiebos) and *Portulacaria afra* (Spekboom), showed visible signs of browsing (i.e. umbrella shaped). *Opuntia ficus-indica* (Prickly Pear) and *Opuntia aurantiaca* (Jointed Cactus), possible indicators of a degraded vegetation state, occurred throughout the farm. Modified areas on the farm are represented by various cut lines and existing vehicle tracks, as well as footpaths.

The condition of the vegetation is in a relatively good ecological state to the west of the farm, with moderate degradation levels based on species diversity, intactness and a high level of impenetrability, despite the presence of *Opuntia ficus-indica* (Prickly Pear) and *Opuntia aurantiaca* (Jointed Cactus), as well as existing vehicle tracks and footpaths. Towards the northern boundary of the farm, including the steeply sloped areas, the condition of the vegetation is mostly intact, with a

higher level of impenetrability (i.e. fewer grassy areas, lower prevalence of *Cynodon dactylon* (Bermuda Grass) and decreased levels of visible browsing).

The proposed pipeline on Portion 523 will be installed adjacent to the fenceline along an existing vehicle track within the existing citrus orchards. In the road reserve of the DR01976 road, where the irrigation pipe is proposed to cross under the road, the vegetation is irreversibly modified and edge effects have resulted due to the permanent removal of natural vegetation along this road.

The NFEPA Wetlands Map delineates one Unchanneled valley-bottom wetland, in this case a farm dam (artificial wetland) within 500m of the southern boundary of the farm. These onsite observations were supplemented by the review of relevant aerial imagery and planning frameworks for Umgcambo and are subject to assessment by a vegetation, as well as an aquatic specialist during the EIA Phase of the assessment.

For further information regarding the affected environment see Chapter Three of the Report.

OVERVIEW OF THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

This Scoping and EIA Process is being implemented in four phases, the details of which are outlined in Chapter Four of this report:

- Pre-Application Scoping Phase
- Application and Scoping Phase (**We are here**)
- Environmental Impact Assessment Phase
- Decision Making and Appeal Period

Public Process Consultants has been appointed as the independent Environmental Assessment Practitioner (EAP) to conduct the Scoping and EIA, including Public Participation for the proposed development. Notice of Intention to commence with Scoping and EIA, dated 22 May 2018, was submitted to the competent authority, DEDEAT, Sarah Baartman Region. The notice was also sent to all identified Interested and Affected Parties (I&APs), affected/ Juristic Organs of State and State Departments on 23 May 2018. Comments and issues that have been raised to date, as well as appropriate responses that have been provided by the EAP, are included in the Comments and Responses Trail contained in Chapter Four of the Report and copies thereof included in Appendix F.

In order to commence the legislated portion of the Scoping and EIA process, an Application Form for Environmental Authorisation in terms of the NEMA EIA Regulations, 2014 (as amended) was submitted to DEDEAT on the 7 May 2019, together with the release of the **Consultation Scoping Report (CSR)** for the legislated minimum 30-day consultation period. All registered I&APs were notified in writing of the release of the CSR for comment, which extended from the 7 May 2019 to the 7 June 2019. Acknowledgement of receipt of the submission of the Application Form, as well as the CSR was received from DEDEAT on the 15 May 2019 and reference number EC06/C/LN2/M/21-2019 was assigned to this application.

The Final Scoping Report (FSR), together with the Plan of Study (PoS) for EIA, has been prepared for submission to the Provincial DEDEAT for their decision-making, within 44 days of submission of the Application Form. The FSR includes all the comments received from I&APs during the Pre-Application (project announcement and Draft CSR), as well as Application Phase of the assessment (CSR). Should DEDEAT accept the Scoping Report and approve the PoS for EIA, the assessment process will enter into the EIA Phase.

For further detail regarding the Scoping Phase of the assessment process, including Public Participation, see Chapter Four of the Report. For further detail regarding the Plan of Study (PoS) for EIA, see Chapter Six of the Report.

Identification of Issues

Issues and concerns identified for inclusion in the Scoping Report that require specialist assessment in the EIA phase have been identified using the following methods:

- A Site Visit.
- Preliminary input from specialists.
- Desktop review of regional planning documentation and frameworks.
- Scoping of issues and concerns with I&APs, including authorities and affected/ Juristic Organs of State and State Departments, through correspondence received (emails, comment forms) in response to the project announcement.

Based on issues identified thus far in the process, the table below indicates the specialist studies/ input required for the EIA Phase of the Assessment Process:

Specialist Study	Broad Scope of Assessment	Proposed Specialist
Ecological Specialist Assessment	To include an assessment of the potential impacts on vegetation and fauna (desktop), as well as the delineation of sensitive No-Go areas; and the determination of suitable buffer zones. To include an assessment of the impacts on aquatic features identified on the site and within a 500m radius, including wetlands and watercourses. To determine the Present Ecological State of the site and confirm the mapping of CBAs and ESAs, as included in various biodiversity planning frameworks (e.g. ECBCP and NFEPA mapping resources). To provide recommendations for management/ mitigation of residual impacts.	Deborah Vromans, Ecological Specialist Marisa Jacoby, Public Process Consultants
Phase 1 Paleontological Impact Assessment	To determine palaeontological features on site and the impact of the proposed development thereon. To provide recommendations for management/ mitigation of residual impacts.	Dr John Almond, Natura Viva
Phase 1 Archaeological Impact Assessment	To determine archaeological features on site and assess the potential impacts on these features. To provide recommendations for management/ mitigation of residual impacts.	Dr Johan Binneman, Eastern Cape Heritage Consultants
Soil Suitability Assessment	To determine the agricultural potential of the soils for citrus production and provide amelioration measures for soil limiting factors. Desktop slope analysis.	Danie Kritzinger, Agrimotion
Traffic Impact Assessment	To determine the impact of additional trip generation on the public road network, as well as the suitability and safety of the proposed access point.	Cary Hastie, Engineering Advice and Services
TECHNICAL TEAM		
Irrigation Infrastructure	To estimate the quantity of water required for irrigation, and to be stored on site in a proposed new dam. To confirm associated irrigation infrastructure (including drip/ micro irrigation) layout, including pipe diameters and length, as well as dam location, dimensions, storage capacity and design.	Jaco Kruger
Roads and Wet Services	To determine the footprint and locality of the logistical services area on site (i.e. offices, store, staff facilities, loading and collection zone, manager's house, and a road surrounding the facility), as well as bulk services requirements (i.e. domestic water, effluent management and stormwater management).	JJ Spies Civil Engineers

The full specialist Terms of Reference (ToR) are contained in Chapter Six of the Report. The results of the specialist studies and other relevant project information will be integrated into the Draft Environmental Impact Assessment Report (Draft EIA Report).

Current Stage in the Process

The Scoping & EIA process is currently at the stage where the FSR and PoS for EIA (this report) has been prepared for submission to DEDEAT for their decision-making. Should DEDEAT accept the Scoping Report and approve the PoS for EIA, the assessment process will enter into the EIA Phase. No comment period is proposed for the FSR.